

Washington Park Arboretum

BULLETIN



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The Washington Park Arboretum is managed cooperatively by the University of Washington Botanic Gardens and Seattle Parks and Recreation; the Arboretum Foundation is its major support organization.

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ABOVE: The new dwarf introduction *Hosta* 'Blue Mouse Ears' is dainty and slowgrowing, making it an attractive candidate for troughs and other garden containers. Read about Riz Reyes's other best recent-plant introduction selections beginning on page three. (Photograph by Riz Reyes)

ON THE COVER: The Himalayan blue poppy (*Meconopsis betonicifolia*) is a signature plant of Lakewold Gardens, a Washington state historic landmark located at Gravelly Lake near Tacoma, Washington. Read accounts by "Bulletin" Editorial Board members Steve Lorton (on page 10) and Daniel J. Hinkley (on page 15) of Lakewold's development under the extraordinary gardener Eulalie Wagner. (Photograph courtesy of The Jardin Group, 2011)

Perilous Times for the Arboretum

So many good things have been happening in the Arboretum of late. We completed the Gateway to Chile Garden this fall. The Japanese Ambassador to the United States visited us to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Japanese Garden. We signed an agreement with the State for very substantial improvements for the Arboretum as compensation for the anticipated damage that the new SR520 roadway will do here. The Arboretum Foundation's donors, past and present, have contributed more than ever to fund both our new garden projects and our annual programs and care for the trees and plants here in the Arboretum. It has been an extraordinary time of growth and renewal.

But, the news this month is serious and alarming. In her budget letter to the legislature, Interim President of the University of Washington Phyllis Wise included a list of potential budget cuts to meet the legislature's target of reduced state support for the University. Prominent in her list of potential cuts was this line: "Reduce or eliminate funding for the Washington Park Arboretum."

Oh, my! We at the Foundation had anticipated serious budget cuts for the Arboretum, given the state's budget crisis. But, we had not expected anything so drastic. The State provides about \$300,000 per year in funds for maintenance and care of the plant collections in the Arboretum—about the same amount as the Foundation now provides for those purposes and for the environmental education program for school-aged kids. So, it would be a tremendous blow to the Arboretum if the State support were to disappear. What is to be done?

We are endeavoring to learn how deep the proposed cuts actually will be and how we can minimize them. We will let you know through our website and email as soon as we have better information and we will be asking for your help. In the meanwhile, we are mobilizing in several ways: we are working to raise more funds to support the care of the collections and we are working on the creation of a new Unit of volunteers for the Pacific Connections Garden whose primary purpose will be to care for and maintain these new gardens. These volunteers will be trained in their care and work in concert with the small (and possibly shrinking) grounds crew and horticulture staff here in the Arboretum. Just as the volunteers of Unit 86 focus on docenting in the Japanese Garden, these volunteers will be dedicated to a special part of the Arboretum.

This new Unit, together with our long-time volunteers in existing units, the corporate volunteers who come on Day of Caring (150 of them this year!), the Qwest Pioneers, and our newest volunteers, the Wells Fargo Green Team—all will all be a vital part of the team called upon to care for the Arboretum.

As in the late 1960s, when the R.H. Thompson Freeway was the impending threat to this special place, these proposed budget cuts imperil the future of the Arboretum. The slogan of those days was "Save the Arboretum!" It looks like it's time to use it again. ~

Cheers,



Paige Miller, Executive Director,
Arboretum Foundation

TREND-SETTING PLANT INTRODUCTIONS: Catering to a Population of Savvy Gardeners

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY RIZANIÑO REYES



The plethora of plants being introduced at your local nursery or garden center is overwhelming. In an effort to keep consumers engaged and interested in buying plants, breeders are constantly

developing and releasing material to satisfy gardeners' cravings for the new, the unique and the different. Not all new introductions are created equal, however. While potted specimens on the nursery table may look

ABOVE: *Echinacea 'Hot Papaya'*



vigorous and appealing, how they perform in your garden may be a completely different ball game.

Over the past few years, I have seen a flood of “new plants” appear in magazines and online blogs, and used as promotional items by various horticultural organizations. Often, these plants aren’t really new at all. What’s new to one nursery grower may be a plant that actually has been around for awhile—since plants are exchanged among growers many times, and the process of selecting a new hybrid or developing a variation of a plant takes many years. So from a plant’s original point of discovery—whether it’s from a breeding line, a random seedling in the garden, or a genetic mutation in a tissue-culture laboratory test tube—it takes time to increase its numbers and get it out



to growers in limited distribution. Evaluations follow, and if the plant is deemed garden worthy, it may be registered for a patent and/or a trademarked name. Then brokers and independent companies implement their mass marketing campaign.

The hype created by many of these companies can be quite outrageous; anything to cater to natural human instincts, needs and desires! By trying to “look past the flash to avoid the potential trash,” as a mentor of mine once said, I do what I can to find a great new plant that will do well in my garden for many years to come. Being human, I’ve caved and acquired the newest of the new to satisfy my own curiosity—and I justify it by writing articles like this to communicate which garden plants are worth seeking out!

ABOVE LEFT: *Helleborus* Winter Jewels Series ‘Cherry Blossom’

ABOVE RIGHT: *Helleborus* Winter Jewels Series ‘Onyx Odyssey’



Marketing of Plants

“Capitalize on growing trends!” is the basic tenet of Marketing 101, right? In the plant world, I find that the trends tend to be diverse, and no one trend ever dominates the others. It is really how designers and gardeners utilize plant material that helps determine what will be made widely available. Because gardening is as subjective an art form as any other means of personal expression, their decisions about which new plants to select fluctuate greatly, based on what kinds of gardens they are creating and the purposes for which they are using particular plants. Two of the biggest trends in gardening today are lower-maintenance gardens and utilizing plants in small urban spaces. Naturally, designers and gardeners will gravitate towards selections with drought tolerance, dwarf and compact versions of standard species and cultivars, and evergreen plants that don’t

shed profuse foliage that will have to be raked up in autumn. Then there’s the surging edible-gardening movement to grow organic plants and make local produce more readily available. There’s also the plant collector to keep in mind, who often spends lavishly at the nursery to obtain the newest, latest, most unusual specimens for his or her garden.

Coneflower Crazy: *Echinacea 'Hot Papaya'*

No other group of perennials have been so hyped and developed over the past few years as the coneflowers (*Echinacea*). They’ve come a long way in a short time, ranging from the common purple coneflower (thought to shorten the duration of common colds and boost your immune system) to the multi-colored, alien pom-poms that sport trademarked cultivars with names that conjure delicious desserts. First it was the introduc-

ABOVE: *Hosta 'Raspberry Sundae'*

tion of the warmer shades of yellows and oranges; almost overnight, these were surpassed by even richer hues. The forms became weirder and weirder: There were variegated-leaf selections that looked diseased or mite infested, and there were fluffy, double petals that appeared in random areas. On the more practical side, selections were made for increased flowering; dwarf, "knee-high" selections, especially suited to container gardens, also were developed.

'Hot Papaya' has been a standout amongst the new wave of coneflowers for its unique color and unusual form. When I first encountered this cultivar at a trade show, I was very impressed with its intensity of color; the fun, yet bizarre form; and its gentle fragrance. Breeders aren't done with coneflowers yet... An entire series of new *Echinacea* is being developed and promoted as I write this!

An Everlasting Jewel: *Helichrysum 'Pink Sapphires'*

The company Blooms of Bressingham took the bold marketing step to list this plant as a tender perennial that grows as an annual in colder regions, rather than to claim that it performs in a wide variety of climates and conditions. In the two years we have grown it at the University of Washington Botanic Gardens (UWBG), it has proven itself hardy and quite a charming plant. The genus is called the "everlasting", because it retains its vibrant color, even when dried. The blooms of this selection exhibit a papery texture and a metallic, shimmery-pink color that look attractive against its small, dusty-gray and silver foliage. Having seen it

grow well in rich, composted soil with regular irrigation, I would imagine that it performs even better in poorer soil, and with some neglect. The jewel-like flowers are irresistible and draw comments from UWBG visitors who spot this little treasure at the edge of a bed or spilling over the edge of a container as a filler plant.

Winter Garden Gems: Hellebores

Northwest gardeners clamor for these winter-blooming beauties, and recent introductions by local and international breeders continue to satisfy their craving. Various selections of the extravagant *Helleborus x hybridus* are highly colorful and regional favorites. Incorrectly identified as "*Helleborus orientalis*" by many nurserymen, these plants represent complex crosses utilizing over 16 different species of the genus, providing a wide spectrum of colors, unusual patterns and double-flowered selections (which once were considered the holy grail of *Helleborus* and belonged only to the keenest, most well-connected plant collectors). They are now readily available—thanks to breeders who, as in the case with echinacea, have capitalized on their hardiness and adaptability to a wide range of climates and growing conditions.

Specimens of *Helleborus x hybridus* are often sold as named, colored strains, which means they are all grown from the seed of controlled breeding lines to produce plants that aren't genetically identical yet all look very similar in appearance. The benefits of such strains include reduced production time, as hellebores are slow growing and take years to form a clump that can be divided. (They also resent distur-



ABOVE: Dwarf introductions of sedums and sempervivums



bance, once established.) The best time to purchase these plants is when they're in full, peak bloom from early February into March.

Other selections of hellebores have been mass-produced in laboratories via micro-propagation (a process whereby a small piece of a growing point on a plant is multiplied). The resulting new clones produce outstanding garden plants. The popular Christmas rose (*Helleborus niger*) has long been coveted for its early-winter white blooms. Two new selections from Germany have inundated nursery racks and display tables at garden centers, and for good reason. A compact selection named *H. niger* 'HGC Jacob' was selected with the

container gardener in mind. Then there is *H. niger* 'HGC Josef Lemper', with extravagant yet refined blossoms and remarkable vigor. Both selections boast abundant numbers of flowers that display well in containers, making them very handsome plants in a retail setting.

Shade Plants That Have It All: Hostas

Hostas continue to be the most popular shade-loving perennials in our region, in part because there are so many from which to choose. Not only are the foliage and occasionally fragrant flowers a treat, but breeders also are creating new varieties with attractive petioles and flowering stems. An entire series of dwarf selections is becoming increasingly popular, especially amongst gardeners with little space.

Terra Nova Nurseries has attempted to produce the first-ever, elusive "red hosta" by releasing a seedling it named 'Raspberry Sundae'. Not only does the plant have striking, creamy variegation in the center of the leaf, but it also has deep-red, speckled stems—with just a few of the red spots making their way up into the leaf blade. There will surely be improvements in the near future that will result in the red coloration appearing further up the leaf.

As noted above, dwarf selections of hostas are becoming more numerous. Spearheaded by *Hosta* 'Blue Mouse Ears', variegated mutations in tissue culture laboratories have yielded new varieties that often fetch higher prices than their larger relatives. For the

ABOVE: *Lilium 'Miss Libby'* (Photograph by Judith Freeman)

collector, these are fun to use in the garden because they're relatively slow growing, they grow well for many years in troughs and containers before requiring division, and they don't take up much space.

Sexy Succulents: *Sedums* and *Sempervivums*

With the popularity of green roofs and vertical walls, sedums are becoming more popular and widely available, from the smaller stonecrops to the stately *Sedum telephium* 'Herbstruede'. Many of the named selections are finally coming to the fore, and more obscure selections are being sought out and propagated. 'Autumn Joy' is a remarkable garden plant with year-round interest and low maintenance requirements. For high-end gardeners it has become somewhat boring, however, as they seek sedums with richer colors and unique foliage. Just a few years ago, a wave of purple-leaved forms saturated the market. 'Purple Emperor' has done fairly well for me, but the deepest purples, such as 'Postman's Pride', 'Black Jack' and 'Xenox', have been fairly disappointing and inconsistent: They seldom maintain their purple colors or good form and habit, in my experience.

The wide array of colors and shapes included in varieties of *Sempervivum* is quite remarkable; they include dark bi-colors, intriguing webbing and pubescence on the rosettes, and changes from bright reds and oranges during summer to deep purples and steely greys in the winter. This genus has a lot to offer gardeners who have limited space and want plants that respond well to the lowest possible maintenance program—including inconsistent watering and hot, dry conditions where nothing else will grow.

Plants for a Cause: A Lily and, Yup, Another Coneflower

One of my friends, lily-breeder extraordinaire Judith Freeman, has bred many unique lily hybrids that grace gardens around the world. One of Judith's recent introductions

not only represents a trend in lily hybridizing, but also represents a new approach to marketing that I sincerely hope takes root and becomes prevalent in the gardening industry. 'Miss Libby' is an example of a new wave of tough-as-nails hybrids with remarkable vigor, substance and hardiness—as well as a color never before seen in lilies. Through the use of laboratory techniques, hybrids like this—a cross between an oriental and trumpet lily—can be produced. What makes this introduction truly special, however, is the fact that it was named after one of Judith's friends who is a cancer survivor; all profits from the sale of each bulb she sells goes to the American Cancer Society in her friend's honor.

Echinacea 'Hope' has been around for a few years and boasts a very sweet blossom of the softest pink imaginable. For the casual admirer, there really isn't anything new or exciting about yet another coneflower, but keen gardeners will notice 'Hope's' broader petals and unusually strong upright stems, as well as its profusion of flowers from summer into fall. But add an eye-catching tag with the symbol of a pink ribbon, as well as a little write-up about the Susan G. Komen Foundation, and it goes far beyond being just a great garden selection: A portion of each plant sold is donated to fund breast cancer research.

As we've seen, new plant introductions aren't all created equal. The process of getting a plant into the market is long and tedious. And experimenting to determine which ones will truly last in your garden can often take just as long, if not longer. One result of the hype—and millions of dollars poured into the marketing, production and distribution of new and exciting plants—is the disappointment that casual home gardeners may experience if such a plant proves short lived, or unsatisfactory in other ways.

But from a business standpoint, this is exactly what growers want. Often, their mindset is: The more gardeners "eat up" these new plants and then cast them away after

finding them unsatisfactory, the more they will be willing to buy new plants to replace them (as long as we continually churn out new and exciting plants each season). Again, it's about manipulating how we behave, what we're attracted to, how we spend, how we live, and, also, how our tastes change over time. And who is to say? Perhaps it is enough to get two or three years out of a plant before you find something else to put in its place in the garden...

In a way, that is the fun of these so-called "new introductions." What's exciting about gardening is trying something new and unusual and seeing how well it fares, given the conditions you're able to provide for it. The keenest gardeners may seek out the latest craze and ensure a special plant's success by going to extra lengths to accommodate its

requirements, but most of us who don't have as much time to devote to our own landscapes need plants that are guaranteed to thrive with minimal care in a wide range of growing conditions. So, we still must rely on avid plants people, breeders and marketers to continue feeding us with new trends that keep us on the edge of our seats... then down on our knees, in order to plant. ~

RIZANIÑO "RIZ" REYES is a gardener for the Center for Urban Horticulture at the University of Washington's Botanic Gardens. He also owns and operates RHR Horticulture and Landwave Gardens, where he regularly seeks out, experiments with, and utilizes extraordinary plants for Northwest gardens.



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THE MUSIC OF A GRAND



Text and photographs from "Lakewold: A Magnificent Northwest Garden," © by the Jardin Group, 2011. Distributed by the University of Washington Press, Seattle, Washington

BY STEVE LORTON

*G*arden is a performing art. Like a symphony, it is the product of its composer, who often conducts the early performances. Such was the case with Lakewold. Eulalie Merrill Wagner was both composer and conductor from 1938 until her death in 1991.

Works of art are best understood if something is known about their creators. Born

in the early 20th century (1904), Mrs. Wagner entered a world of wealth unimaginable to most of us. And while the term "aristocrat" is inapplicable to Americans, she was brought up in much the same way as a titled European. She was schooled in fine art and architecture, the domestic and decorative arts, history and the classics. Her family traveled regularly to the cultural pockets of the American East Coast and to Europe. They lived in Paris while Eulalie's childhood home, Merrill House on Seattle's

ABOVE AND RIGHT: The sweeping grounds and curvilinear swimming pool at Lakewood Gardens.

GARDEN



Capitol Hill, was being built. In retrospect she would see herself as both a product of Europe's Belle Epoch and the American Gilded Age.

Eulalie Wagner had a keen sense of the difference between fashion and style and was a master of both. She cultivated artists and designers—admiring them, surrounding herself with them, and helping them flourish. In an afternoon at a garden club or charitable foundation event, she could launch a trend or instantly turn a startled, young local talent into a regional star.

She learned the flora, fauna and geography of the Pacific Northwest. She understood it all as a vast collection of natural splendors and as an enormous treasure trove of resources that held developmental potential for her entrepreneurial family. She lived her life at the dawn of the remote empire that has become the fabled Pacific Northwest. But, most importantly, Eulalie Wagner was imprinted with a uniquely American understanding of service to one's community and country. Her drive, her personal commitment and her philanthropy were the stuff of legend.



I met Mrs. Wagner in 1982. Working under the pseudonym "William Andrew," I'd been asked to photograph and research four Pacific Northwest gardens—Lakewold among them—for the Boston publisher Little, Brown and Company. That first encounter cemented my understanding of the importance of this garden, and its creator, to American horticulture and, just as certainly, to our American heritage.

I turned off the main road, drove through the towering firs into the opening that surrounds the house, and parked in the gravel drive at the entrance. A brass sign hanging on the front doorknob instructed me to "Come In." I did. Then I made a few noises, wondering what to do next, hoping to be heard. Suddenly Eulalie Wagner appeared. Radiantly beautiful and well past the middle of her life at the time, she was wearing a Chanel suit and jogging shoes. She ushered me through the house and to the garden. As we passed from the entry hall into the expansive garden room, I looked to my right and commented, "Is that rug an Aubusson?"

"Ah!" She said, "You recognize it. Yes, it is. I won't let my grandchildren walk on it."

Once outside, she pointed out the dawn redwood (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*), which she proudly said was the oldest and largest in the area.

As I looked at that venerable tree from its knotty trunk to the top, a sharp glint of light shot from the side of Mrs. Wagner's face. I looked toward it. She caught my glance and put her hand to her cheek as if I'd spotted some imperfection.

"The Sun just hit your earring. It made a little flash." I was mildly embarrassed.

"Oh, this," she said, reaching up and pulling off her left earring and handing it to me. It was a half sphere, about fifty-cent size, dark wood, blackish-brown, fine-grained and polished, sprinkled with quarter-carat diamonds. "We had a handsome old black-walnut tree here. It came down in a storm. I was heartbroken. So my husband cut a round

from the trunk and sent it off to Van Cleef & Arpels. The designer came up with these and a necklace." I returned the earring and she clipped it back on.

In time, that moment and that jewelry would become symbolic to me. I would grow to learn that, after her family, what Eulalie Wagner cherished and celebrated most was authenticity... Authenticity in all things, but especially in people. She had a sixth sense when it came to spotting the real thing. And it didn't matter to her if it appeared in wood or in diamonds.

We walked on along the pathways as she directed my attention to favorite plants, saying, "You know, I am a hands-in-dirt gardener." There was a certain defensive staccato as she fired out the words "hands-in-dirt." But she was telling the truth. Yes, she had a staff. She needed one for a garden of that size. But it was obvious that she was also no stranger to mud on her knees. Her manicure, like her footwear, utilitarian at best, told the tale.

As I left late that afternoon, having been given a generous heaping of her energy and time—and lunch to boot—I thanked her for the visit. I wanted to make my parting words meaningful and memorable. "Thank you, Mrs. Wagner. This has been wonderful. Your garden is a symphony." She seemed to like that.

And there began a long and wonderful adventure and friendship for which I count myself lucky.

Eulalie Wagner arrived at Lakewold in 1938, taking over what was merely a sketch of a score for her symphonic garden. The long brick walk leading to the rose-covered gazebo was in place. The grand stone and wood fence that flanks the roadside edge of the property was there—and, thankfully, a stand of virgin Douglas fir had been left, along with the signature Garry oaks of the Tacoma area. She went to work.

Mrs. Wagner learned by trial and error. Inside the boxwood parterres she planted a spectacular display of spring bulbs. As they

faded, a kaleidoscope of perennials popped up for summer bloom. But June rains made them flop to the ground. Quick to learn and respond, Mrs. Wagner replaced the perennials with sturdy, floriferous, long-blooming and low-to-the-ground displays of annuals in gorgeous color combinations. Impatiens was a favorite. She changed the show annually.

She also understood the value of getting good advice. In the 1950s, renowned landscape architect Thomas Church entered the picture. His commission, and the friendship that ensued between the Wagners and the Churches, lasted a lifetime. His impact on the garden was enormous. As a cutting-edge designer who loved the easygoing simplicity of western life, Church also knew his client and conjured his horticultural sorcery in exploiting both the classical grandeur of the garden (and its creator) and the obstreperous nature of the Northwest wilderness. When Mr. Wagner needed a lap pool for exercise, Church designed the symmetrical, four-lobed pool with its low, planted pillars that serves as a focal point today. It is both beautiful and functional.

Close to the middle of the garden stands a multi-trunked Douglas fir. Useless for lumber, it is what loggers call a "wolf tree." Mrs. Wagner pondered what to do about it. Cut it down? Limb it up? Church looked at it and said, "Feature it!"

Today that venerable tree stands proud in the garden, encircled by a walk-through shade garden. For many years a mother mallard made her way, about 5 1/2 feet up, to the first outcropping of its trunks to build her nest and raise her young. To Mrs. Wagner's delight, the mother duck squawked with authority when any visitor,



herself included, strolled past the nest as they studied the shade garden.

As revered as Church was, however, his counsel was only that... an opinion offered. When he nixed the idea of the rockery, Mrs. Wagner forged ahead nonetheless. And isn't any visitor today happy she did?

When the Tacoma Garden Club began studying scree, it resulted in the Gray Scree at Lakewold as well as the scree at the Tacoma Garden Club Northwest Native Plant Garden in Point Defiance Park. The Wagner Family provided the funds for a handsome gazebo at the foot of the scree so that visitors could sit there and contemplate both its simplicity and its intricacy. A contradiction of terms? No. Go see the scree. And when you go, witness yet another manifestation of Eulalie Wagner's generosity and spirit of public service.

Once I visited the garden with the renowned British garden designer and author, Rosemary Verey. Rosemary eyeballed the statue of Bacchus standing under the lattice dome of the Tea House. "Isn't he beautiful!" Rosemary commented, hoping for a history and a possible price tag.

Mrs. Wagner nodded, "Beautiful. Yes, I think so." Then Rosemary's eye went to a trio of stone fish resting at the bottom of a stone vessel filled with water. "Oh! How beautiful! May I pick one up?" Her British accent was shrill and punctuated.

"Of course," Mrs. Wagner responded.

"Just what is the stone?" Rosemary asked.

"Jade," Mrs. Wagner answered dryly.

And so it went. As we drove back to Seattle, Rosemary carried on about how lovely the garden was and how much she enjoyed the visit and how she found Eulalie "captivating,"

ABOVE: Eulalie Wagner, who developed Lakewold Gardens between 1937 and 1989.



later comparing her to an English Country Lady. High marks, one would suppose, from the maven of British gardening who helped Prince Charles design Highgrove. I doubt that Mrs. Wagner thought about the visit again.

My hunch is that the great Rosemary Verey was so impressed with that very fine garden, so surprisingly paired with the woman who stood behind it in an unassuming American way, that it rattled her British sensibilities. The garden seems to encompass a multitude of styles and periods, with room to spare—a manifestation of the enormity and the eclecticism of our country. Something, I suspect, the British envy deeply and regret losing.

Like the scree, the Mount Fuji Cherry trees, the Fern Garden, the Waterfall (so real you can't believe a pump is behind it), the Herb Garden with its English well, which I say (and remember hearing) is Spanish... all of these are inimitable

movements in the symphony that this composer produced and, for so long, conducted. In flower, leaf, color and form she produced allegros and andantes, crescendos and arpeggios, surrounded by ancient Northwest conifers that could rumble like timpani in a gust of wind.

* * * *

And there it stands and grows and changes, season by season, one performance after another. Lakewold continuing, Lakewold in all its glory—past, present and future.

Somewhere, out there, where the guests of the Goddess Flora meet up and celebrate, there are girls in the linen dresses and the satin bows of the early 20th century flirting with boys in spats. They are at a garden party, and grandes of the Belle Epoch and the Gilded Age are swanning about. Thomas Church, and his beloved wife, and painters, designers, architects, a handful of writers (I hope I'm among them one day) meet up. The music swells from some distant place in the garden, perhaps from inside the Tea House. It's Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade*, or perhaps it's Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony* (with emphasis on *The Ode to Joy*)... Ah, but then again it might be Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*. Whatever it may be, at some point one of the guests will say, "Where is Eulalie?" And the answer will be, "I'm certain she'll join us soon. For the moment she's conducting the orchestra."

Then a toast is proposed: "To Eulalie and her Lakewold! May this unusual collision of eras, continents, classes and design elements—and this incredibly vibrant massing of plants—remain true to the spirit of its creator-conductor forever." ~

STEVE LORTON is the retired Pacific Northwest editor of "Sunset" and a member of the "Bulletin" Editorial Board.

Text and photographs from "Lakewold: A Magnificent Northwest Garden," © by the Jardin Group, 2011. Distributed by the University of Washington Press, Seattle, Washington

A GARDEN IN ITS TRUEST SENSE

BY DANIEL J. HINKLEY

Nearly three decades ago, as I emerged freshly polished from graduate school at the University of Washington, I was employed at the Bloedel Reserve on Bainbridge Island. It was during that time that I became acquainted with the owners, Prentice and Virginia Bloedel, who were still spending the summers at their beloved country estate. While they were savoring their vacation during



ABOVE AND RIGHT: Collections of rhododendrons, azalea and ferns are core players in Lakewold's background plant displays.



my first year of employment, Mrs. Bloedel suggested I visit her sister, Eulalie Wagner, in her garden on Gravelly Lake to see my first *Meconopsis* in flower. Thus began my introduction to Lakewold Gardens.

Yet my entree to the ambrosial climate of the Pacific Northwest began the year I moved to Seattle for my continuing education. Horticulturally focused, I lived for the duration in the endearing Stone Cottage in Washington Park Arboretum. It took little time to comprehend the staggering possibilities concerning plants that could be successfully grown in the greater Puget Sound basin.

As a keen apprentice to gardening, newly arrived from the hypothermic climate of the northern Midwest, I found the notion that I might come upon a plant in its floral zenith—or possessing transportative foliar effects at any month of the calendar—intoxicating. Surrounding the cottage, itself in one of the best collections of woody plants in North America, were hardy palms and winter-flowering camellias, fire trees from Chile and dove trees from China. My appetite to learn, as well as possess, was ravenous. When I left the University of Washington with my degree in 1985, I was armed with a lofty plentitude of Latin binomials and an incalculable number of trees, shrubs and

vines growing in four-inch pots—and, as an unfortunate aside, virtually no idea how to gather them together to make a garden.

As an unexpected consequence, it was my exposure early on as a Pacific Northwest horticulturist to those who could assimilate artfully the plants they so passionately collected that forever changed my vision of what a garden in its truest sense could be. It was during that first visit to Lakewold that I encountered a superb collection of plants—both woody and herbaceous—that seemed immediately less a chaotic library and more a contemplative ordering and celebration of diversity.

Although I was still well away from my own attempt at making a garden, the seeds were sown on that day for what I hoped to ultimately achieve when I had my chance. Yet it is unlikely that I could possibly have articulated that thought on that day, nor is it likely I would even have attempted to.

As youth are known for doing too well, I did not fully acknowledge those who had been and were still in the process of changing the horticultural fabric of where I now garden. They had been acquiring, evaluating and extolling or lamenting the virtues of plants appropriate for our region long before my very own germination.

It was the solid foundation that Eulalie Wagner, along with numerous of her contemporaries, had built that expanded our collective horizons. The curse of the passionate gardener's garden is that its framework loses its novelty as it matures. Not acknowledged in this anathema is the fact that the novelty has worn thin on the plants they chose to have grown because they have been mainstreamed in commerce; they are now commonplace because they were ultimately deemed good plants deserving wider recognition in regional landscapes.

Though I am not yet as mature as Mrs. Wagner was on that day we first met in the mid-1980s to admire her blue poppies, I am sufficiently enough hardened off to now recognize that her lasting legacy was not necessarily the elevating of our adventurous spirits and her demands that we take a few risks in our plantings. Today both her generosity and that of her family ensure that Lakewold can continue to invite, instruct and inspire for generations to come. It is a garden that I look forward to returning to on a regular basis—to admire; to watch the collection mature, evolve and transmute, as all good gardens should; and to once again acknowledge a garden whose aesthetic impact on my eventual garden will echo throughout the decades ahead. ~

DANIEL J HINKLEY, plantsman, author and lecturer, has lived and gardened in the Puget Sound region for 30 years. Along with his partner, Robert L. Jones, he founded Heronswood Nursery near Kingston, Washington, and directed its operation until its closure in 2006. Currently, he gardens on five sunny acres atop a windswept bluff on the Kitsap Peninsula, where he trials his collections from Asia, Central and South America, Mexico, South Africa, New Zealand and Australia. He also serves as a member of the "Bulletin" Editorial Board.

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ABOVE: Barbara Seleton and colleague Toby Bradshaw have had notable success in propagating one of Seleton's favorite trees—the Pacific madrone (*Arbutus menziesii*). **OPPOSITE:** Barbara Seleton and David Zuckerman. (Photographs courtesy of Barbara Seleton)

BARBARA SELEMON: Propagating Knowledge

BY REBECCA ALEXANDER

*H*ow does an arboretum propagate the plants needed for its collections, and how does a horticultural institution cultivate a love of gardening? Over the past 25 years, Barbara Selemón has been a vital part of the answer to these questions. Her long career at the Washington Park Arboretum (WPA) and the Center for Urban Horticulture (CUH) culminated in her work as plant propagator for the University of Washington Botanic Gardens (UWBG) but encompassed education and outreach, grant writing and more. Last fall, Barbara's position was a casualty of state budget cuts. Faced with being laid off, she opted to retire. By devoting such a significant part of her life to one workplace, she leaves an imprint on the landscape, both figuratively and literally. Although there are no signs or labels announcing it, you are in the presence of the fruits of her labor whenever you walk among the plantings at the Arboretum and CUH.

Harder to trace, but rooted as deeply, is the love of plants she has imparted to numerous high school students and budding horticulturists under her tutelage.

Barbara's life with plants began before she was a year old, when her parents decided to build a home on her grandfather's 200 acres of farmland in western Pennsylvania. She and her two sisters

grew up amidst fields of corn, tomatoes and raspberries, but it was Barbara who—from an early age—took the greatest interest in gardening and helping with mowing and weeding. Her love of being outside has never left her.

After college, Barbara moved to Seattle, sight unseen, expecting to find work as a paralegal. Instead, she became a teaching assistant at Mariner High School in Everett. Her interest in nature photography, and her love of the Northwest landscape, soon turned her toward horticulture, but education remained a persistent thread in her career. After taking a class in the Landscape Horticulture program at Edmonds Community College, she was hooked. Barbara became the first woman gardener at Seattle's Chittenden Locks and Carl English

Botanical Garden, where she gained a wealth of experience in seed propagation, garden design and the use of tools. She grew, designed and installed the perennial beds there in 1981 and later worked at Children's Hospital, where she grew and designed with annuals and perennials under the guidance of gardener Sue Buckles.

In spring 1985, Barbara took a temporary job with the University of Washington grounds crew, but by summer was hired as a gardener at the Arboretum. There



were only men on the gardening crew at that time, and during her trial-by-tractor (pulling a chipper using a vehicle on which she had had no previous training) she unintentionally rolled onto Azalea Way (luckily without flattening any visitors). In two strokes of good luck, though, Barbara became acquainted with her future husband, David Zuckerman, and discovered there was a separate nursery crew for the Arboretum. She and David joined the nursery crew together, and Barbara left the tractor behind—moving into the greenhouse to do the work she preferred: growing plants.

Former Arboretum and Center for Urban Horticulture plant curator Tim Hohn was instrumental in Barbara's career transition: "I had the pleasure of working quite closely with Barbara while I was the curator at the Arboretum and CUH. Barbara and I worked together to change her position from Arboretum gardener to plant propagator based on her expressed interest in the position and my confidence that she would be the right person for the job. Barbara was such a pleasure to work with, given her soft-spoken, mild-mannered charm and sensitivity. In addition, Barbara was a refreshingly honest and frank partner who wasn't afraid to query an unfamiliar process or offer advice to ensure that she could do the best possible job. I particularly enjoyed sharing our mutual enthusiasms for growing plants new to the collection and, often, new to our experience. Barbara certainly resides close to the top of a list of people I enjoyed working with while at the University of Washington."

John Wott, Professor Emeritus of Urban Horticulture (and former Washington Park



Arboretum Director), recalls that,

"Barbara moved into the position of propagator when the new greenhouse was built at CUH [in 1987]. When I created a new academic course called Plant Propagation, Barbara became my assistant. She obtained the class materials, and worked with me in the lab exercises. She usually gave a couple of lectures during the course and always led many of the greenhouse exercises. [...]

She also was a member of the International Plant Propagators Society [...] and participated in their

annual meetings for many years, often giving talks and with leading tours and other activities when they met in the Seattle area. She became acquainted with many of the propagators and nursery people on the West Coast. She was the one who tried to propagate a cutting from a valuable tree when it might be toppled by a storm in the Arboretum. She also was tasked into trying to propagate difficult-to-root, one-of-a-kind plants from the Arboretum. She loved for the [green]house to be meticulous and if you left a mess, Barbara made sure you did not do it a second time."

Riz Reyes, gardener at the Soest Garden at CUH and a young horticulturist of growing renown, worked under Barbara's supervision and recalls her generosity and depth of knowledge: "One of my first encounters with Barbara [was my] request for cuttings of an unusual and sweetly fragrant winter-blooming *Veronica (Hebe)* and a charming chrysanthemum growing at the Center for Urban Horticulture. [Barbara] gladly handed me a pair of pruners and a small plastic bag to take a few cuttings." Although the original *Hebe* perished, "it lives as a lone rooted



cutting getting established in my garden. [The] chrysanthemum carries on and continues to be a spectacle each fall when its airy, peachy-pink flowers command attention." Barbara's scrupulous propagation notes "of all the species she's encountered over the years" gave Riz timing and sowing guidelines for seed he collected in China. Ten months after sending Barbara seeds, Riz recalls, "She showed me into the poly houses to see my collections germinated, actively growing, and accessioned for UWBG. It was quite an honor."

Eventually Barbara became involved in native plant propagation for the Union Bay Natural Area. In 2004, she completed a Masters degree in Education from Western Washington University, focusing on student development and service learning (an educational approach that uses community service as a teaching and learning strategy). This

training led to her development of a service-learning program at UWBG.

In 2005, when implementation of the Master Plan for the Washington Park Arboretum began and a huge number of native plants were requested to fill in newly open areas, Barbara approached local high schools with horticulture programs and enlisted their efforts in growing the plants for the project in "satellite greenhouses."

To be a skilled propagator, one needs considerable curiosity, creativity and patience. Barbara particularly loves the element of the unknown when growing from seed: Each type of seed has its unique demands. Barbara worked extensively on the Arboretum's Holly collection (growing from seed and cuttings), and on the Pinetum's new pines, but she especially enjoyed working with wild-collected seed brought back from Chile by [then-graduate student, now professor] Sarah

ABOVE: Members of Seattle Youth Garden Works in 2007.
(Photograph courtesy of University of Washington Botanic Gardens)



Reichard and Professor Clement Hamilton, and from New Zealand by Tim Hohn. She propagated seeds for the Pacific Connections Garden's China section (using seeds collected by local plant expert and explorer Dan Hinkley), and for the Cascadia section (using seeds from the expeditions to the Siskiyou Mountains in Oregon led by Randall Hitchin, the plant collections manager at UWBG).

One of Barbara's most challenging, but also rewarding, tasks was propagating Pacific madrone (*Arbutus menziesii*). (As it turns out, this is her favorite plant. She has always been fascinated by tree bark, and that of the madrone is unusually striking.) She worked with Clem Hamilton and David Giblin (UW Burke Museum Herbarium manager) as part of the Save Magnolia's Madrones program,

rooting plants of different ages, and from different populations, but with zero results. Toby Bradshaw introduced a different approach, injecting agrobacteria (plant pathogens used in biotechnology) into stems to stimulate adventitious roots. They tested the agrobacteria on a carrot first, and it sprouted roots. So they collected seeds and germinated them, then a student assistant air-layered one-year-old saplings and put soil around the injected stems. Three of the plants succeeded, and this method was adopted for propagating rare and important species. Bradshaw and Seleton describe this method in a chapter of "Decline of Pacific Madrone" (Center for Urban Horticulture, 1995).

When asked about the most meaningful work she has done, Barbara says that the

ABOVE: Seleton teaches fern propagation to young students.
(Photograph courtesy of University of Washington Botanic Gardens)

opportunities she has had to combine her love of plants with her desire to share knowledge has given her the most satisfaction. In 2007, she established the Native Plant Propagation Program to grow native plants for use in the Arboretum. Barbara worked with a crew of avid teens from Seattle Youth Garden Works (SYGW, a program that serves disadvantaged youth) outside in the dead of winter, washing and salvaging sword ferns and propagating them. Those who participated in the effort ultimately had the highest Seattle Youth Garden Works graduation rates. The program had begun without any funding, but Barbara secured a grant from King County's Wild Places in City Spaces for two years in a row. Colin Anderson, former farm and program manager of Seattle Youth Garden Works, says, "Barbara was very dedicated to our partnership and was always willing to help SYGW fulfill its mission of providing job training to homeless and underserved young people. Without Barbara's support and involvement, SYGW would not have been able to provide the educational and employment experience they received through the Native Plant Propagation program. The youth in the program really recognized what a great opportunity it was to learn from someone who was such an expert in her field, and they really enjoyed working with her. I appreciate everything Barbara did for SYGW, and it was a pleasure working with her! Barbara proved what is possible when professionals are willing to seek out opportunities to share their experience and knowledge with others who might not otherwise have the chance."

At the time of this writing, Barbara is working on a short-term project with Arboretum Education Supervisor Patrick Mulligan, helping students in high school horticulture programs develop service projects and write mini-grants to fund them. Barbara, always supremely focused and industrious when at work, is finally taking a little time for personal creative endeavors, such as

studying botanical illustration and tending her own garden, until the next opportunity to share her knowledge with others arises. What she will take away from her time at the Arboretum and the Center for Urban Horticulture are the lasting connections and friendships with colleagues that have developed over the years. ~

REBECCA ALEXANDER is the Plant Answer Line librarian at the Elisabeth C. Miller Library. She first met Barbara Seleton while working in the Education office at the Arboretum in 1989.

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Since assuming the job of propagator, Barbara Seleton has organized this facet of our plant collections program to an impressive state of efficiency.
Our propagation records, methods, and follow-through are the best they have ever been."
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The Witt Winter Garden Renovations

*Now is the Winter
Garden of Our Content*

BY SUZANNE FERRIS



The Joseph A. Witt Winter Garden functions as an important hub in Washington Park Arboretum. Many visitors walk through its tunnel of witch hazel to reach other areas of the Arboretum, including the Woodland Garden. It is a display garden rather than just a collection of plants. To quote, Randall Hitchin, the UW Botanic Gardens Plant Collection manager, "This is an aesthetic arrangement of plants meant to give pleasure."

All great gardens are performance pieces: theater with color, texture, fragrance and light playing across a staged slice of nature that we attempt to control. But all gardens need editing over time, and that includes the Witt Garden. Prior to recent renovations, it had several problems to address. The most pressing one was a lack of light and access along its south-



eastern edge, due to trees and shrubs that over time had outgrown their original allotments of space. In 1988, Iain Robertson, University of Washington professor of Landscape Architecture—along with Tim Hohn, then the curator of the Arboretum—proposed a new plan that included removal of a huge elm that was casting too much shade over the garden

ABOVE: *Polystichum neolobatum* (Photograph by Suzanne Ferris)



beds; its widespread roots also prevented amendment of the poorly draining soil. Those renovations have finally been carried out. The removal of the elm and some mid-story hollies and low *Stranvaesia davidiana* var. *undulata* now allows raking morning light to reach all the plants in the Garden.

The removal of these plants has also sizably increased the size of the bed in which they were planted. David Zuckerman, horticulture supervisor of the University of Washington Botanic Gardens (UWBG) and project manager for the Witt Garden renovations, had the bed amended with 50 cubic yards of sandy loam,

ABOVE: A *Stewartia monadelpha* underplanted with *Cyclamen coum* in the Witt Winter Garden. (Photograph by Joy Spurr)

raising it above the water table and thus improving its drainage. The expanded bed features 357 new plants that are top-dressed with five to seven inches of arbor chips—amendments that will over time improve the texture of the original clay soil. The ground in this area now tips toward the north and west, permitting better drainage and a more dramatic setting for the new small plantings in the bed, including hellebores. A new viewing point has also been established in the same area.

The renovated planting areas are now a mix of older and new plants. David Zuckerman's experience over a 28-year career in the Arboretum will ensure that the new plants interweave with the old ones. Professor Robertson has entrusted the plant placement to the team involved in the renovation, knowing that all of its members—from Randall Hitchin, the Arboretum's Plant Collection manager, to the horticulturists—will prove knowledgeable and careful stewards of the new Garden.

None of this would have happened without the generous support of Unit III of the Lake Washington Garden Club—a donation of \$13,200 to the renovation in memory of 14 of its members. (See sidebar on p.29.) All the monies went toward hard costs such as the elm removal, soil amendments and some of the new plants. In addition, 11 new rhododendrons were donated by Steve Hootman, executive director of the Rhododendron Species Foundation and Garden located in Federal Way, and two *Garrya elliptica* 'Siskiyou Jade' were gifted by Fairmeadow Nursery.

Jean Witt has continued to be an active member of Unit III since the Garden was named



ABOVE: *Rhododendron strigillosum* (Photograph by Steve Hootman)

in honor of her deceased husband Joseph A. Witt, who was curator for the Arboretum from 1952 to 1983. The legacy of his vision for a winter garden now seems to have been accomplished.

Here are some of the new plant additions to the southeast bed of the Garden:

Cyclamen coum is scattered throughout this bed. It has much smaller leaves and blooms six months earlier than the *C. hederifolium* located near the north entrance of the Garden. *Leucothoe fontanesiana* 'Nana' and *Epimedium* 'Black Sea' help weave together the unusual colors of the new hellebore cultivars located nearby. The warm tones of ivory and yellow in *Helleborus niger* 'HGC Josef Lemper', *H. 'Golden Sunrise'* and *H. 'Ivory Prince'* will be stunning additions to the under-story beneath three new *Viburnum x bodnantense*, including the two unusual cultivars 'Deben' and 'Charles Lamont'. Two new *Daphne bhoula* will scent the air soon, as will the *Viburnum farreri* 'Candidissimum'.

A strong component of the new garden renovation is the donation of 11 rhododendrons of particular interest or unusual provenance from the collection of Steve Hootman of the Rhododendron Species Foundation. His talents, in collaboration with those of Randall Hitchin, have made the new plant palette visually vibrant and botanically unique. This is a case where "design by committee" worked. Hitchin requested vigorous new specimens of *Rhododendron lutescens* to augment the existing group of older specimens. The new specimens will be pruned in the spring to pair better with the old specimens. This pruning will have the added benefit of encouraging a flush of new, purple-red growth.



Other new rhododendrons have added benefits, such as the winter interest of the purple-red exfoliating bark of the *R. argipeplum* and *R. barbatum*, and the fiery autumn colors of *R. dilatatum*. The bristly, red petioles and bracts on *R. strigillosum* also show up on the *R. argipeplum* and *R. barbatum*. The two new *R. argipeplum* have the added value of indumentum on the undersides of the leaves. (Steve Hootman explains that the bract and petiole bristles are a form of indumentum.)

Hootman personally collected the seed for the new *Rhododendron argipeplum* and the *Ribes davidii* on a trip to Sichuan, China in 1995—one of numerous recent expeditions he has taken to various parts of Southeast Asia and China. Hootman propagates many different types of wild-collected seeds for others, as well as himself. During the past 10 years, he has donated more than 125 well-grown rhododendron specimens to the Arboretum. His most recent gift includes 25 wild-collected seedlings of *Ribes davidii* from a botanically rich area in the Jinpin Mountains in China, where in karst (limestone) formations and

deep ravines this low-growing plant displays red leaves in autumn. This discovery was made on the same expedition during which four new rhododendron species were sighted within half an hour. (He discovered this *Ribes* in the company of Peter Cox, an eminent British plant explorer.) The inaccessibility of this mountain landscape preserved an island of diversity from local predation for firewood.

Ferns did not factor into Iain Robertson's original plan, but their strengths are better appreciated now that species such as *Polystichum neolobatum* are more readily available and have stood the test of time. This fern is well suited to a winter garden because its glossy foliage is stiff enough to withstand snow loads. The cerise blossoms of *Cyclamen coum*, blooming from December into January, presage the new pink growth of the *Adiantum venustum* (evergreen maidenhair). The *Anemone nemerosa* will look fantastic blooming with the *Ribes davidii*, a plant partnering borrowed from the Miller Botanic Garden in North Seattle. Roy Farrow, the UWBG horticulturalist assigned as the lead gardener on this

ABOVE: left to right—Roy Farrow, Randall Hitchin and David Zuckerman. (Photograph by Suzanne Ferris)



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project, will cull the pulmonarias, which date from the original planting but have proved to be too high in terms of maintenance. An old *Corylus maximus* 'Atropurpurea Superba' has been coppiced—and will be again—to reshape it away from the path. Roy will have ongoing responsibility for maintenance of the Witt Garden.

The centerpiece of the new bed will be the three specimens of *Acer tegmentosum* 'Joe Witt' with their striped bark, twigs covered in grey bloom, red buds in winter, and displays of pendulous yellow flowers after the leaves emerge in spring. This tree is rare in cultivation and a perfect tribute to Joe Witt. The colors of the entrance plants such as *Calluna vulgaris* 'Robert Chapman', the *Garrya x issaquahensis*, the *Hamamelis x intermedia* 'Ruby Glow' and 'Jelena'—all yellows to oranges to pink—lead on to the more saturated tones of cerise pink and scarlet of the blossoms of *Cyclamen coum* and the buds of *Acer tegmentosum*. This symphony of colors merges into the loud brass section of hot-scarlet trumpets of the *Rhododendron barbatum* and *R. argipeplum*. I don't like red rhododendron blooms, but if this sequence goes off as planned, my hat is off to the conductor of this plant symphony, Iain Robertson. His depth of knowledge about color sequencing, not only for blossom but bark, leaf and indumentum is carefully orchestrated. Each of his collaborators appreciated Iain's willingness to listen, revise and be open to their ideas on the ground. The opportunity to combine his vision and plan (which was given pro bono) with the cash donation from members of the Lake Washington Garden Club Unit III, and the dedicated work of the Arboretum curation staff and the maintenance crew (who are state workers), is a blessing in this difficult economy. Public gardens give to everyone equally, but they need revising every once in awhile. With cutbacks to the UWBG budgets three years running, where would we be without those 14 ladies and their farsighted friends investing in the Arboretum?

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Ruth Ellerbeck
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Marjorie Clausing
Lee Clarke
Bettina Bailey
Pat Boehm

Garrya x issaquahensis
(Photograph by Joy Spurr)

When I called Jean Witt to enquire about the gift, she demurred from taking any credit for it. When I called Steve Hootman and asked about the provenance of his donated rhododendrons, he pointed out that his organization and the UWBG have had a long-standing policy of gifting dozens of plants of wild-collected provenance to the Arboretum. I was dumbfounded. This community of plant lovers reaches across time and institutional barriers because of individuals like Iain and Steve who have been unstinting in their gifts of professional services and rare plants—and Jean Witt and her fellow members of Unit III of the Lake Washington Garden Club who contributed \$13,200 from their legacy fund. ~

SUZANNE FERRIS is a garden writer, designer and botanical artist. She volunteers in public and neglected private gardens. Suzanne serves as a dirt gardener with Horticultural Intervention Art, and as a project manager for King County's One Percent for Art Program.

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